

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Previously Presented) A method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets comprising the steps of:
  - providing coated sheets of metal having opposing first and second surfaces;
  - creating a raised region on at least one of the coated sheets, the raised region formed on the first surface by lancing at least one embossment on at least one coated metal sheet, the embossment comprising a depression having a raised peripheral edge, and wherein the second surface remains continuous and uninterrupted;
  - juxtaposing the coated sheets to introduce a gap therebetween, the gap defined by the raised region; and
  - applying a laser beam forming a laser weld wherein gases produced during the forming of the laser weld escape via the gap.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Previously Presented) The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to claim 1 wherein said step of creating a raised region comprises punching an array of embossments.
5. (Currently Amended) The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to claim 4 wherein the raised peripheral edge has a [[thickness]] height of about 0.007 inches.
6. (Cancelled)

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7. (Cancelled)